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THE CHURCH AND THE RELIGION OF RUSSIA

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“There is no book on the Russian Church,” wrote one of her most prominent sons in answer to an inquiry of Professor J. Y. Simpson, of the University of Glasgow, “because our church cannot be discussed in a book. Better than from any book will you understand it if you go to such a religious center as the Troitzko, a famous monastery near Moscow, especially on the great festivals, or if you go to our churches, particularly in Lent.”

This is an indirect way of stating the difficulty of defining the religion of a colossal nation as far removed from us in spirit as in space. With comparative ease and accuracy one may describe the ecclesiastical doctrines and institutions of a people; for these are tangible and visible—can be portrayed by voice or pen, brush or chisel. But the religion of Russia is broader and deeper than the creed, polity, cultus, and precepts of the Church of Russia. The life of the spirit defies definition. It is elusive as the dawn, pervasive as the fragrance of spring, and subtle as the skylark’s song. It consists, not of temples and sacraments, priests and monks, dogmas and canons, but of moods and motives, aspirations and longings, hopes and fears, loves and beliefs, convictions and ideals—all welling up from the soul’s depth. These we must understand far more by sympathetic fellowship with men’s joys and sorrows than by a scientific analysis of their dogmas and institutions.

Moreover, to know the Russian aright we shall have to go from temple to *traktir*, or tavern. Here is gathered, night after night, a motley crowd of men and women of every degree—cabmen, market women, soldiers, musicians, dancers, poets, hawkers, philosophers, beggars, millionaires. In an atmosphere heavy with fumes of tobacco, sipping tea and, until recently, drinking vodka, singing, talking, they discuss every subject—religion, politics, ghosts, and

eternal questions. In the temple they stand at attention before priest and altar in silent awe; but in the tavern they talk, talk freely, their mind and heart under the impulse of their physical and spiritual needs. From the Yama, the famous public house of Moscow, have sprung a number of religious sects; there prayer meetings are held, Bibles are sold, coppers are collected for building churches and buying bells. The chatter of the tavern perchance throws as much light on the Russian genius as the chant of the cathedral.

Enough has been said to indicate the difficulty of doing justice to a nation's religion by putting it into words. We shall therefore with diffidence discuss first of all the Christianity of Russia as it has prevailed for a thousand years under the form of oriental or Greek orthodox Catholicism.

The first chronicler, Nestor, the Herodotus of Russia, who died in 1114, speaks of Princess Olga as the forerunner of Christianity in Russia, "as the morning star is the precursor of the sun, and the dawn is the harbinger of the day." At Constantinople she found the true God and was baptized in 879 by the patriarch Polyeuctes, with the emperor as her godfather. Her grandson Vladimir was destined to become the Russian Constantine, for he not only became a convert to Christianity but made it the religion of the state. He sealed his baptism in the year 988 by marrying on the same day Anna, the sister of the Greek emperor Basil. The day before he decreed that "whoever on the morrow should not repair to the river, whether rich or poor, he should be held for an enemy." It is needless to say that the people were suddenly gripped by pangs of penitence and were baptized, as much perhaps to save their necks as their souls. Thus Christianity was introduced in a formal way into Russia, an event which more than any other shaped the future destiny of the nation.

To understand the religion of Russia today we shall have to consider the character of the Christianity which Vladimir brought into Kiev in the tenth century.

It was oriental Catholicism, which reached the summit of its glory in the Cathedral of St. Sophia, in the soaring domes, the princely patriarchs, the majestic pomp, the sumptuous ritual, and

the unrivaled treasures of silver and gold, gems and mosaics. Hither came the commissioners of Kiev in search of a religion. Awed into submission, they reported in glowing terms to their prince: "When we stood in the temple we did not know where we were, for there is nothing else like it upon the earth; there in truth God has His dwelling with men; and we can never forget the beauty we saw there. No one who has once tasted sweets will afterwards take that which is bitter; nor can we now any longer abide in heathenism."

How did the religion of the patriarchs of St. Sophia in the tenth century differ from that of the Galilean fishermen in the first and from that of the contemporary popes of Rome? The answer to these questions depends on the viewpoint one holds.

Professor Glubokovsky says: "Orthodoxy [this includes Russian Christianity] is the authentic and primitive Christianity of our Lord Savior and of his apostles. Orthodoxy successively preserves and holds it, adapting it and developing it amid various historical conditions. It results therefrom that in its inward trust Orthodoxy thinks itself as Christianity in its primordial completeness and uncorrupted entirety."

With the same zeal the Russians claim to have original Christianity, and reject the Catholicism of Rome. In his *Encyclical* of 866, Photius, patriarch of Constantinople, cited and condemned five ritualistic and doctrinal errors in Western Catholicism—points sufficient to warrant a permanent division of the two churches, Greek and Latin. They were as follows: (1) the Roman custom of fasting on Saturday; (2) the use of milk, butter, and cheese in the first week of Lent; (3) compulsory celibacy of the priesthood; (4) the separation of baptism and confirmation; (5) the addition of *filiouque* to the creed. The seriousness with which these differences in incidentals were taken throws light on the character of Christianity at that time both in the East and in the West.

It is interesting to listen to the interpretation of the schism of the ninth century given by a cultured Russian in a conversation two years ago with Professor Simpson. He said:

Hereby orthodoxy was saved from the spiritual despotism and the dogmatic and disciplinary innovations of the Roman rival; from those alterations

of doctrine and waywardness which resulted in the fruitful protest of the sixteenth century, from the celibacy of the priesthood with its attendant evils, from the sacrilegious commerce in indulgences, from the horrors of the inquisition, from the baneful might of excommunication, from the exclusive monopoly of the Holy Scriptures by the hierarchy for its profit.

These confident claims to apostolicity and an unperturbed catholicity the Protestant historian cannot admit unchallenged. Professor Harnack says: "In its external form as a whole this church (Greek or Russian) is nothing more than a continuation of the history of Greek religion under the alien influence of Christianity. . . . It takes the form, not of a Christian product in Greek dress, but of a Greek product in Christian dress."

It is a far cry from the Nazarene preaching on the mount to Constantine in his imperial robes at Nicea. Under the influence of oriental mysteries, Greek philosophy, Jewish and Roman law, and vulgar paganism, the simple gospel and the community of believers underwent a profound change, a reversion to a lower plane rather than an advance on the higher plane of the religion of Jesus and the apostles. The brotherhood of the saved became a domineering hierarchy; faith in a living Christ became assent to definitions of Christ; the indwelling spirit of holiness and love became church law and custom; the love feasts became mysterious sacraments; the benign admonition of the brethren became the arrogant rebuke of the priests; heartfelt sorrow for sin became a dreary round of penitential works; fervent expectation of the coming Lord became hope of immortality. The church of gospel and life became the church of doctrine and law. The religion of the spirit became a religion of authority; servile obedience took the place of filial service. When these changes were wrought primitive Christianity was transmuted into Greek Catholicism. The transformation may have been a historical necessity, but it can hardly be conceded that it was a continuation of the Christian religion in its original purity.

The difference between Eastern and Western Catholicism is not covered by the five points in the *Encyclical* of Photius or by the statement of Professor Simpson's cultured Russian friend. The two Catholic churches are rooted in the same subsoil, but the stem

of ancient Catholicism is divided into two distinct branches: the one Graeco-Slavic, the other Romano-Teutonic, each bearing fruit after its own kind.

The terms which indicate the differences between the two churches are national and racial—Graeco-Slavic and Romano-Teutonic; those which describe resemblances are spatial and religious—catholic, i.e., universal, and apostolic, i.e., Christlike. The term Catholic connotes much that they have in common. They have the same trinitarian theology and the two-nature Christology, clergy and laity, priests and bishops, abbots and monks, sacraments, masses, virgin, saints, images, icons, relics, sacred days, and seasons. To the casual observer, the *filioque* and the pope excepted, they are as much alike as two peas of the same pod.

Notwithstanding these resemblances the two churches differ widely in spirit and method. The difference is rooted in the theory of salvation which came from Greece and not from Palestine. Redemption is not, as held by some, forgiveness of sin, nor, as held by others, release from the power of demons. It is regarded as deliverance from the state of decay and death. Through sin and the fall man was separated from God, the source of life. As the branch lopped from the vine he is withering and dying. Sin accordingly is not guilt to be atoned and forgiven, but disease and death to be healed and overcome. The goal of redemption is in the other world, for here and now in this realm of death deliverance is not possible. At best one can obtain in this life through the services of the sanctuary only foretastes of the blessedness to come and momentary anticipations of the beatific vision.

Roman Catholicism shared with Greek orthodoxy this view of an otherworldly redemption, the hope of exaltation to blissful immortality. Sin, however, was regarded as guilt which requires satisfaction and forgiveness. Even in this life, therefore, men may obtain pardon and find peace and joy in faith and love. Western Catholicism accepted also Augustine's vision and program of a City of God on earth—the nations of the world controlled by the divine will through the agency of the Catholic church. With the rule of St. Benedict in one hand and St. Augustine's *Civitas Dei* in the

other the Church of Rome demanded in the name of her Lord that the individual renounce the world and the institution conquer the world. Doors and windows were thrown open toward imperial Rome, whose spirit of dominion and conquest entered the Holy City and lent itself to the realization of the Kingdom of God upon earth. Roman Catholicism may be compared to an ellipse with two foci, the one representing redemption in the world to come, the other the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Greek Catholicism is like a circle with its center representing otherworldly redemption—only that and nothing more. The Catholicism of the West appeals to the will, develops to some extent the individual through the institution, is active and aggressive. The Catholicism of the East appeals to the phantasy, is contemplative and mystical, and indifferent toward the political order, which is in a state of hopeless dissolution. The two churches differ as the Greek philosopher and the Roman emperor, the one laying aside his cloak, the other his scepter, and each in his own way taking up the cross of Christ.

From this point of view we are now prepared to consider the distinctive characteristics of Slavic Christianity. It is a venerable institution that ministers to the religious needs of ninety millions of souls. Observe its holy synod, its patriarchs, bishops, priests, monks, cathedrals, churches, chapels, monasteries, virgin, saints, relics, icons, vestments, candles, ritual, mass, choirs, dogmas, precepts, mysteries—a highly complex structure into which are built the feelings, superstitions, learning, philosophy, and art of a thousand years—so different from the groups of disciples and brethren who once worshiped in the spirit in Jerusalem and Antioch, in Ephesus and Corinth. As one looks about him he may wonder whether it is the glory of Greece Christianized or the Christianity of Jesus Hellenized. Of its purpose there can be no doubt. It seeks to deliver men from this perishing world and this body of death by infusing into him the essence of the being of God. This motive controls every detail of this elaborate ecclesiastical structure as the vital principle of the acorn controls the oak from root to fruit.

The central doctrine of the Graeco-Slavic Christianity is the incarnation of the Logos, the divine-human Christ. A Greek

Father once said, "The idea of God becoming man is what is new in the new, nay, is the only new thing under the sun." This is indispensable, because man can be delivered from death only when he is brought into organic union with God—such a union of the divine and human natures as was effected in the God-man, Jesus Christ. Thus the substance of divine life is infused into man's nature, man is deified and endued with life immortal. This is the mystery of salvation. True, there is a suggestion of this process in the writings of Paul and of John. The latter speaks of the word become flesh, revealing grace and truth unto the world. But these blessings are conceived as spiritual qualities which are appropriated by faith. The gospel was an appeal to reason and conscience, begetting a life of faith working in love. In the centuries after the apostles, grace was turned into a hyperphysical substance imparted in portions through sacramental channels, after the manner of oriental mysteries. Truth was resolved into incomprehensible dogmas passing all understanding, to be accepted with implicit faith as a heavenly mystery. Thus by a subtle process of transformation, salvation by grace through faith came to mean the deification of man's mortal nature by a pharmacological infusion of the substance of the Logos incarnate through the mysteries of worship. Preaching plays a small rôle—the ritual is everything. Ecclesiastical rules overshadow moral laws. Word, doctrine, deeds are of little avail; only so the divine life is infused into man through the mystery of cultus. Professor Glubokovsky supports this view in an article in 1913, when he says:

Orthodox Christianity manifests itself, not as a doctrine, but as a life of mystic communion with God in Christ, and of restoration of the grace of the Holy Spirit in the entire brotherhood of the faithful. . . . That is why in orthodoxy are so prominent the sacraments of grace, which embrace the whole existence of man in every respect. They are here, not an outward symbol, not a ritual accessory, but an indispensable element of the vivifying power of Christianity itself, which is assured by hierarchical priesthood in direct succession of the Lord Savior.

The idea of redemption has perceptible influence in shaping the government, worship, and piety of oriental orthodoxy. At first under the oversight of the patriarch of Constantinople, then of the

patriarch of Moscow, the Russian church is now controlled by the Holy Synod of Petrograd. And this notwithstanding an ancient Russian prophecy which ran as follows: "The first Rome was betrayed; the second or new Rome [Constantinople] fell; and they both were succeeded by the third, Moscow; but a fourth shall never be." Peter the Great founded the Holy Synod and thus brought the church more directly under the power of the czar. Its members were appointed and all its actions must be ratified by him. According to the *Fundamental Laws*, Art. 42, of Peter the Great, "the emperor as Christian sovereign is the supreme Defender and Protector of Dogmas of the Divine faith, Guardian of Orthodoxy and of all piety in the Holy Church." This does not mean, however, that the czar has power to define doctrine or to dictate in spiritual matters. These come under the jurisdiction of the hierarchy speaking through the Holy Synod. An official connected with the Synod said to Professor Simpson in 1916: "The Emperor is the protector, but not the head, of the Russian church. The head of the church is our Lord. . . . That is the great distinction between us and the Romans. There is no necessity to have a head of the church upon earth when we have such a head in Heaven." The czar may at times have tried to exercise lordship in religious matters, and the hierarchy may have tried to control civil affairs; but in these attempts both acted contrary to the orthodox ideal of the relation of church to state in Russia; however, closer than in any other orthodox land is the union between czar and synod. "For," says Professor Glubokovsky, "it has been wrought into life itself in her history and was welded together until it became monolithic. Orthodox church has historically produced orthodox czar in Russia and secured for him a monarchical form of government, and the czar, on his part, protected and defended her, assuring to her inner sway and outward grandeur. Orthodoxy was made one with the people in the autocratic sovereign." This sense of unity is expressed in the famous triad—the slogan of all reactionaries: "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationalism."

The redemptive idea accounts for the indifference of the orthodox church toward secular dominion, in this respect so unlike the

Roman Catholic church. It has no care for the control of empires and kingdoms on earth, for its sole purpose is to deliver men from this perishable world and to exalt them to the life immortal in a world beyond. It has no program for the transformation of the state into a City of God. All it asks is the protection of the state, so long as the rulers are orthodox, while it performs its spiritual and religious functions. The highest ideal would be a universal empire in the bosom of which the orthodox church would continue its saving work. But, since such an empire is not in existence, each nation has its own church without destroying the unity of Christianity, a unity, not in a visible head, but in a common creed and cultus.

The Russian church is primarily an institution of worship, not of doctrine or of deed. Even its dogmas are volatilized and visualized in the ritual. Weary of theological controversy and hair-splitting distinctions, the oriental Catholic has resolved no more to speculate, but to contemplate, divine truth. The incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ—the God-man—and the Trinity are presented in dramatic symbolism, the benefits of which are obtained by mystic absorption rather than by logical thought. Man has no other communion with God than to behold him. He has no fellowship with him, but simply enjoys the vision of him. The blessings of redemption are mediated also through hundreds of efficacious formulas, small and great. Signs, pictures, sacred acts punctiliously and submissively performed, communicate divine grace and prepare the devotee for eternal life. The house of worship, its ornaments, sanctuaries, altar, icons, candles, the vestments of the priests, the singing of the choir, the liturgy in every detail reaching its climax in the mass, complete the act of worship by which the believer feels himself transported into heavenly places and obtains foretastes of celestial bliss. Nothing so well satisfies the religious longings of the moujik as the sacred icon in which the spiritual is fused with the material and the heavenly becomes visible in the form of the earthly. Icons are found everywhere in private and public places. Not a house without its icons, images of virgin or saint. Men serve them in joy and in sorrow, upon going on a journey or returning from it,

through all the vicissitudes of life. Candles are placed before them. They are covered with gold leaf and adorned with costly gems. They are invoked and kissed—for where the image is, there is its prototype. The miraculous power of the saint works in his icon. Respecting the late war a scoffing Russian writer said:

The Japanese prepared for the campaign by dispatching troops; and we answered by opening our folding *ikons*, and raising aloft our religious banners and crosses. . . . At last, with a wagonload of holy images our Commander-in-chief set out hopefully. . . . The religious among the masses explain our reverses by saying that on the journey to the Far East two different consignments of holy images got mixed; and those which were to have helped the Admiral on sea were exchanged for the *ikons* meant for the General of the land troops.

Arrant nonsense as all this must be to the puritan and scientist of the West, there are intelligent Russians today who countenance it. With reference to miracles wrought by saints the Russian friend of Professor Simpson said (1915): "I do not know if St. Metrophanes actually did this or that, or whether any proportion of the stories of St. Seraphim are true, but I do know that in the Russia of today there is a great belief that God is working in the world both through his servants who still remain and through those whom he has taken to himself." This indicates an attitude of expectancy, a naïve sense of wonder, in the Russian mind. In his own way he believes in God with a working faith and is always on the watch for signs of his activity in the world.

To define by contrast, Russian Catholic worship is sacramental and representational; Roman Catholic worship is sacrificial and propitiatory. The aim of the former is the deification of man's nature by its enduement with divine forces through sacred rites and symbols. The aim of the latter is to satisfy and placate God, that the worshiper may be restored to divine favor and gradually become righteous before God. Even the motives for the monastic life correspond to these views of worship. In the East asceticism serves to purify a man and thus to prepare him to receive the divine life; in the West it is intended to satisfy God and thus to win divine favor.

The final test of Russian orthodoxy is the piety or quality of life which it cultivates. Its fundamental motive, as in govern-

ment and in worship, is preparation for the other world, which is always attended by a deep-seated pessimism with regard to this world. "Behold the perfect Christian!" cried a Russian, as he stood before an image of a crucified monk. The monk, who bears the whole yoke of Christ, represents the highest ideal of Christian living. The layman is a Christian of a lower degree. He continues in the social order and observes only the necessary precepts of Christ as prescribed by the moral laws and ceremonial commandments, which require only partial asceticism. The youths are taught the Decalogue, the Lord's Prayer, and the Beatitudes. Emphasis is put on the fact that men are judged according to their works. In this way moral living is to some extent encouraged. But the tendency is to develop far more a ritualistic than an ethical piety. Besides the Decalogue, "nine principal commandments of the church" are taught. These have to do with the observance of festivals and fasts, the honoring of the clergy, the necessity of annual confession, the avoidance of heretical literature, and the solemnizing of marriage on proper days. Innumerable ecclesiastical customs have grown up in the course of the centuries which also have the force of divine laws. These are a burden more than a guide in Christian living.

Withal a desponding melancholia has settled upon the orthodox Christian of the East, so far as he reflects his creed and lives it. From the world he expects nothing and is therefore prepared for the worst and is resigned to his fate. The passive virtues are highly developed. Pity is shown everywhere to "the partners in sorrow," as Marcion in the second century already called his fellows in the faith. Into this enveloping gloom, which paralyzes thought and action, the church and her hope of a blissful immortality casts a ray of light which illuminates but a narrow path for the pilgrim heavenward, while to right and left there is blackness and darkness.

What shall we say of this church more than a thousand years inseparably united with a great nation? Some paint her in dark colors with only an occasional streak of light. Others depict her in bright colors, shading here and there into somber hue. Each paints the thing as he sees it.

True, the Church of Russia has been the buttress of autocracy, the mother of superstition, and the seed plot of intolerance and persecution. Under her care men have remained ignorant, credulous, dependent, timid, easily misled, without self-control, childlike. Many of her priests and monks are greedy, drunken, sensual, sycophants of the government, and betrayers of their sacred trust.

In the *Memoirs of Catherine II* we find the following indictment:

There [i.e., in Russia] a most illiterate or most degenerate sect, under the name of Christians, relies on abstract points of doctrine instead of morals, miracles instead of reason, the performance of ceremonies instead of the practice of virtue, and purchasing expiation for crimes instead of repentance. There the devotee is assuredly a knave and the hypocrite a villain. . . . The principal cause of the vices of the people is the immorality of their religion; and he who considers that in the Russian Greek Church there are neither sermons, nor exhortations, nor catechisms, will at once see the rectitude of my opinion.

The judgment of few Western scholars is more trustworthy than that of Professor Harnack, who writes not as a friend or a foe but as an unprejudiced historian of the liberal Protestant school. He says of the Russian church:

There is no sadder spectacle than this transformation of the Christian religion from a worship of God in spirit and truth into a worship of God in signs, formulas, and idols. . . . Where can we find in Jesus' message even a trace of any injunction that a man is to submit to solemn ceremonies as though they were mysterious ministrations, to be punctilious in observing a ritual, to put up pictures, and to mumble maxims and formulas in a prescribed fashion? It was to destroy this sort of religion that Jesus Christ suffered himself to be nailed to the Cross, and now we find it re-established under his name and authority!

The picture of orthodoxy in its brightest colors is drawn in an article of the current year by Professor Glubokovsky. He writes as an ardent apologist and shows how pagan Russia became "Holy Russia" through the services of the orthodox priesthood. "The mysterious process of the healing of the Christian soul by the operation of grace contributed from the first more than anything else to spiritual ascendancy over heathen vanities, base human

ideals of earthly prosperity, and the despotic rule of arbitrary brutal force." According to one of the oldest manuscripts the people "ate the leavings of the offerings to idols, also that which was strangled or mauled by beasts and torn by birds." The church at once began to combat these savage instincts and insisted on compliance with the apostolic teaching that the people "abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood and from things strangled, and from fornication" (Acts 15:29). In the penitential discipline of the twelfth century unclean food of any kind was forbidden, with special mention of the following: "The meat of squirrels, the meat of strangled animals in which was blood, or the first milk of the cow after calving, or the flesh of bears and beavers." The building up of the national life on canonical foundations like these was not a small achievement.

But of far greater value was the influence of the church on family life and on social and political institutions. The marriage relation was ennobled, the position of wife and mother was dignified, and children were trained in filial obedience and reverence for things divine.

In founding the new social order the church worked for the abolition of serfdom by enforcing the principle that all the people are equally "God's and the czar's." The flotsam of life's wrecks was used in the building up of new social unions outside the existing classes of society, partly for religious and moral purposes and partly out of compassion and for charitable reasons. The church also was a powerful factor in the consolidation of tribes and nations into a united empire. In the fratricidal struggles and intestine wars of the period between 860 and 1054 the decentralizing forces of the numerous small principalities were counteracted by preaching the peace of Christ. The Slavonic tongue used in the services of the sanctuary became the outward sign of the solidarity and the kinship of all Slavs under the shelter of the Holy Mother church. The historian Nicolai Karamzine wrote that "during the centuries of Tartar domination the Christian faith alone enabled us to maintain our place on the human level, preserving our civic sense, keeping our hearts from being petrified within us and our consciences from becoming mute forever; in our humiliation as Russians we yet

felt ourselves raised as Christians, and we loved our mother-country as the land of the orthodox faith."

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, during a period of terrible confusion within and without, when alien races of other creeds pressed Russia on all sides, and personal ambition and hatred within increased the danger of complete destruction, the country was not completely exhausted by the invasion of foreigners simply because, together with the inhabitants of Smolensk, the Russians never forgot the salutary confession: "Brothers, we are all of the same kin, because through baptism in the holy font we were born promising to believe in the Holy Undivided Trinity, knowing that God is living and that the Truth exists."

In the summer of 1916 the chairman of the State Council officially reported that the Russians "were led forward by the example of their fearless priesthood," who often sacrificed their lives like true warriors of Christ.

Even Professor Harnack does not leave his picture of an almost moribund church without its lighter shades. "Among these Christians," he says, "priests and laity, there are men who have come to know God as the Father of mercy and the leader of their lives, and who love Jesus Christ, not because they know him as the person with two natures, but because a ray of his being has shone from the gospel into their hearts."

Even this church, with its traditionalism, dogmatism, ritualism, and monasticism, as much loved by some as hated by others, has often been the earthen vessel of a heavenly treasure and may have in it latent potencies for the revival of a more spiritual religion and the making of a new nation.

We have now seen the Russian in church and have seen what the church has done for him; let us see him in the tavern, and see what nature has done for him and what he may do for religion.

He is an interminable talker, as is always the case where the percentage of illiteracy is high. What does he talk about? The conversation of an Englishman sooner or later turns to sport; of a Frenchman, to women; of a Russian, if he is educated, to Russia; if he is a peasant, to religion. The Russians are forever en route

for a place where they may find out something about God, and if there is an animated conversation in the hostelry of a monastery, a third-class carriage, a teashop, or a tavern it is almost always sure to be about religion. Their tenacious orthodoxy, their obstinate sectarianism, their magnificent churches, their punctilious observance of innumerable ceremonies, their icons, ghosts, witches, familiar spirits, and magic rites are but the shadow cast by their incurably religious nature. Paraphrasing Paul's words when he saw Athens "full of idols," we might cry in Moscow, "Ye men of Moscow, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious." Religious they are, not merely because of the church, but partly in spite of it. Beneath a petrified ecclesiasticism the native fires of the Slavic spirit have never been quenched. They have smoldered at times, but the dying embers revive, and at intervals there burns a bright flame.

While Russia is a composite empire spanning two continents, she is not a mere conglomerate of tribes and nations. She is an organic unit controlled by a common soul. Her literature, art, music, philosophy, religion, theater, and dancing are something intrinsically Russian. Her dominant spirit is not the product of Byzantine Christianity. It is rooted in the Slavic nature, in Scandinavian mythology, and in oriental mysticism. The remote past with its passions, dreams, fears, and hopes throbs in the living present. It is a distinctively religious spirit, if not essentially Christian.

Those who know the Russians best tell us that the most obvious characteristic of the Slavic spirit is love for the suffering, pity unlimited. Rozanof writes: "Is there one page in the whole Russian literature where a mock is made of a girl who has been betrayed, of a child, of a mother, of poverty? Even the thief is an honest thief. (Dostoieffsky's *Honest Thief*.) Russian literature is one continuous hymn to the injured."

Born of pity is the grace of unbounded hospitality and interest in the destiny of the individual. Mr. Stephen Graham says:

You are not looked at askance because you seem poor. The tramps and pilgrims on the road are never made ashamed of themselves. A contrast to America, where the tramp is an object of mirth, where he is regarded almost as

an enemy of society. The Russian takes the tramp in. He has real hospitality, and not only hospitality of hearth and home, the giving of food and a night's shelter, but also a more vital hospitality, that of mind and heart.

The Russian does not limit his love to the honest, the religious, the penitent. He loves the dishonest, the criminal, the despicable, the repulsive, the man who can give no explanation of himself. Half the novels are expressions of love toward "criminals." Over the portal of Russian life and literature might be carved the words, "Neither do I condemn thee."

The Russian instinctively revolts from the orderly and conventional, though subject for ages to the dictates of orthodoxy and of autocracy. He is the antipode of the Teuton, wild in his emotions, anarchic in spirit, amused by laws and regulations. He loves the individual far more than the state. The state to him is a hindrance to freedom and when left to himself the Russian tends toward the chaotic. Russian order, which emanated from Petrograd, was made in Germany. The Slav delights in divine disorder, a glorious promiscuity. The Western soldier marches as if he had been made to order—an automaton from the factory. The Russians march without a semblance of regularity or precision. Some walk, others run; even wives and mothers may be in the ranks carrying bundles for husbands and sons. In the church the worshipers gather in crowds, standing throughout the service; people and colors surrounded by frescoed walls, the faces of the saints, the cloud of witnesses mingle in kaleidoscopic confusion. It is the disorder of the starry sky, of the trees of the forest, and the shrubs and flowers of the mountain side. Withal there is a belief that everyone by instinctive divination finds his place and plays his part in the incomprehensible maze of the world's life. The genius for the disorderly breeds a hopeless incapacity for discipline, efficiency, and progress, which are the cardinal virtues of the West.

The Slav is by nature of a unique, deeply mystic tendency, blending with a lively emotional phantasy and a strain of sadness ending in despair of the world. This is the product of blood, natural surroundings, and the age-long vicissitudes of life. He lacks the bright energy of the Teuton, who "welcomes each rebuff that turns earth's smoothness rough." He gives way to melan-

cholia, loves self-laceration, and often yields to self-destruction. Suicide, even among the children, is extraordinarily frequent. All life expresses itself to the Russian in losses, terrible losses. The coffin-maker in Tchekhof's story, "Rotschild's Fiddle," has a ledger in which he notes down at the end of each day the day's losses. Dostoieffsky voices the religion of the sadness and suffering of Russia, never suggesting, however, that suffering should be removed. He suffered himself, and in his personal suffering discovered the national passion. He learned to know Siberia, not as a foul prison, but as a way of redemption, the path of life. He has no interest in the non-suffering normal person, but prefers the man who is torn, whose soul in all its misery is laid bare. The Russian accepts many things submissively which the Anglo-Saxon considers wrong in themselves—war, disease, pain, death. These have their eternal value and therefore should be cheerfully borne.

Who never ate his bread in sorrow,
Who never spent the midnight hours,
Toiling and waiting for the morrow,
He knows you not, ye Heavenly Powers.

Even sin is not considered as deadly. When committed it is nothing to grieve over. What is done cannot be helped. Varsonophy, a pilgrim from Mount Athos, used to say:

Eh, eh, don't grieve about your sins; be done with them, they don't count. Sin 539 times in a day, but don't grieve about it. That is the chief thing. If to sin is evil, then to remember sin is evil. There is nothing worse than to call to mind one's own sins. . . . There is only one deadly sin and that is despondency; from despondency comes despair, that is more than sin—it is spiritual death.

The Russians seem by nature bent toward the contemplative, mystic mood of Mary; and yet many among them, we are assured, have developed the virtues of serving Martha. They visit the poor, feed the hungry, clothe the naked. "Almost every cultured Russian of grace or character," says Mr. Graham, "has some social or personal responsibility or care—the passion to put right the affairs of some unhappy family, the will to raise drunkards and lawbreakers from spiritual death. It is national and natural, and

it is strange that this should be the characteristic of a people who have a passion for going into the desert and saving their souls."

There is clearly a difference between the Russian church and the Russian spirit. The one in the course of a thousand years has necessarily modified the other. The church has been in a measure Russianized and Russia has been in a way Christianized. Yet neither original Christianity nor the Russian genius has had a free field. For both the Slavic spirit and the apostolic gospel have been as much hindered as helped by orthodoxy and autocracy, institutions which are far more impositions upon the nation than its natural product.

A new era is dawning. Even in orthodoxy the gospel has not been wholly stifled, though the religion of the Slav has found expression in other than ecclesiastical channels. The sayings of Jesus are read in private and public. Men have caught a glimpse of the Savior and Master obscured by the drapery of an ornate ritual. The Slav is quick to respond to the call of the Nazarene. Wherever his words are heard, peasant and priest have shown simple trust in God, delicate moral feeling, and an active brotherly love, the very essence of Christianity. The independent religious life of Russian sects nearly always takes the form of childlike faith in the Heavenly Father, of humility and mercy, and of deep reverence for the Christ. The church herself, by keeping the gospel accessible even in veiled form, has the corrective for its own defects and the potency for its own reformation.

In a time of transition, such as Russia is now in, one hears prophets of hope and of despair. Both may be true to fact. In 1914 Mr. Menshikov in an article in the *Novoye Vremya* (Petrograd) says:

For about a thousand years orthodoxy has existed among the Russian people. For about a thousand years the poorly educated but devout clergymen have been able to communicate their faith to the good-hearted and ignorant people. But something catastrophic has happened, and this great religious mood began to die out, at first among the aristocracy, then among the intellectual classes, then among the clergy. . . . Finally, when the pastors began to desert their charges, their flocks also scattered.

A dissolution of this sort always is a forerunner of evolution. Far more hopeful is the report of Professor Simpson, who has had close contact with the leaders of the church. He says:

The religious condition is indeed promising. Amongst her priests are many in whom there is a longing for the revival and redemption of religious life generally. Amongst her people there are brotherhoods or unions of zealous orthodox souls who gather in special houses, listen to the preaching of particular priests, and sing evangelical hymns. Vodka has been put away and plans are considered to provide good pastimes and useful, reasonable entertainment; to bring educational and religious influences to bear on the lives of the people.

Besides the return to the simple gospel and the affirmation of the Russian spirit, the influence of the West in politics, art, and religion must be reckoned with. This may be an aid or an injury—an aid if it serves to quicken and stimulate the natural and national genius; an injury if it domineers and checks it. For the real Russia now is in as great danger of obscurity by a Christianity and civilization borrowed from Germany or France, England or America, as it was by the importation of Byzantine Christianity and culture in the tenth century. A cry of warning is raised against a growing non-Christian Russia of the Prussian or Parisian kind, glorying in the rationalism, skepticism, and secularism of the West. These are far more alien to the Slavic spirit than were the Greek patriarchs and monks with their dogma and ritual. Only by being true to herself will Russia be true to God, the gospel, and humanity, and fulfil her mission among the nations of the world.

He who would understand the condition of Russia at present and forecast its future must look into the past. It is not without analogy in the history of nations. Especially clear is the resemblance between the rise of the Teuton and the Slav—a resemblance all the more clear because of obvious differences.

The baptism of Clovis, king of the Franks, in 496 marks the entrance of the pagan tribes of the West into the Christianity and culture of Rome. It was their heritage, not their creation. The union of Roman and Teuton was consummated when Pope Leo III, on Christmas Day, 800, placed the crown of the Caesars upon the brow of Charlemagne. Then the Holy Roman Empire was born with divine sanction, universal and eternal in its scope. Old

and refined as was the culture of the Tiber, it was alien to the genius of the Rhine. Barbarous tribes dwelt in houses which they built not, and ate of vineyards and olive yards which they planted not. The Teuton was only the pupil, and not the master, of his heritage. Time came when he learned his lesson and reached his maturity. In vital touch with the ancient classics and the sacred Scriptures, by way of renaissance and reformation he came to himself and brought forth a religion and culture true to his genius. The tribal chaos of the middle age became the national cosmos of the modern age. The authoritative uniformity of Catholicism was superseded by the free diversity of Protestantism. Through toil and travail, out of the middle age the modern world was born. Then too disintegration preceded reintegration, dissolution attended evolution, hope alternated with despair. Nations were divided against nations. Principalities, dukedoms, and kingdoms devoured one another. There were wars, some thirty years and some a hundred years long. These were the birth pangs of a new age.

Vladimir, baptized in 988, was the Clovis of the East. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Ivan III placed the two-headed eagle of the Greek emperor on his coat-of-arms and assumed the title of czar, taken from the Latin Caesar. The Byzantine empire which perished at Constantinople rose in Moscow. Ivan III was the Charlemagne of the Slav and with the Muscovite patriarch shared the domination of the Orient. Orthodoxy and autocracy ruled the Russian. The Slav, like the Teuton, inherited his Christianity and culture, a finished and a foreign product. They were imposed upon him and not produced by him. For a thousand years he has been in training through trials and tribulations innumerable. He too has learned his lesson and is coming to his own. His middle age is just now passing and his modern age is dawning. Autocracy and orthodoxy are crumbling. Revolutions, civil strife, and foreign wars work misery and woe. The spirit of order is brooding over the chaos and in due time will be enthroned.

The bogatyr in Russian folklore is an epic hero who with gigantic force and unbridled license breaks the bonds imposed upon him by ages of paternal and cruel guardianship. In this creature of the

imagination we have a parable of history. He typifies one hundred and thirty millions of Russians rising in their might, breaking the fetters of an ecclesiastical and political tyranny, casting off oppressive institutions of alien growth, to produce a civilization and culture pulsating with the Slavic spirit. It will not be a replica of Germany or of France, of England or of America, but a new Russia blending in its life the mysticism of the Orient and the aggressiveness of the Occident, and contributing to humanity a new ideal of religion and society that will forever enrich the heritage of the race.